



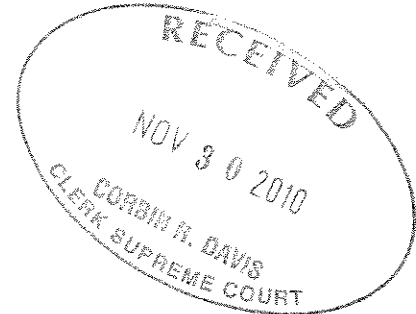
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November 29, 2010

2010-18

Corbin R. Davis, Clerk
Michigan Supreme Court
Michigan Hall of Justice
925 West Ottawa Street
Lansing, Michigan 48913



Dear Mr. Davis:

I am writing in my capacity as Chief Executive Officer of Dickinson Wright PLLC to ask the Court to give strong consideration to the adoption of Alternative B as an amendment to MRPC 6.1.

Dickinson Wright attorneys are extremely active in providing pro bono services to individuals and non-profits lacking the means to afford legal representation. More than half of our attorneys represented pro bono clients in 2010, and more than 40 met or exceeded the State Bar's 30-hour target for pro bono service. Despite this level of involvement by Dickinson Wright and other law firms, it is my perception that access to justice remains out of reach for many Michigan citizens. As explained below, adoption of Alternative B will be an important first step in addressing this problem systematically and would be consistent with the best traditions of the Michigan Bar.

As an initial matter, Alternative B and its commentary offer helpful guidance for lawyers and law firms planning pro bono projects. Alternative B, which is a product of the State Bar's Representative Assembly, is based upon the ABA's nationally accepted best practices. The use of nationally-accepted standards would make the provision of pro bono legal services more efficient and uniform.

Alternative B also recognizes the importance of lawyers doing legal work. Many lawyers engage in charitable and civic activities for both personal and business-related reasons. Nevertheless, members of the bar often do not recognize that they can make their maximum contribution to the indigent by practicing law. The difference between general charitable work or civic involvement compared to pro bono professional service is a source of confusion for lawyers and law firms. Alternative B clarifies this important point when it emphasizes that a

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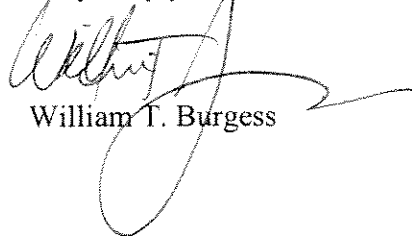
"substantial majority" of a lawyer's pro bono work should involve providing legal services to the poor.

Lastly, Alternative B makes a much needed change to the suggested monetary contribution of lawyers toward pro bono. While the earnings of Michigan's lawyers cover a wide spectrum, the practice of law has provided many with a handsome living befitting a contribution of more than \$300 annually, particularly given that this amount has remained unchanged for twenty years.

I realize that Alternative B has been criticized as "politicizing" pro bono work. To my mind, access to justice is not an ideological issue. Rather it has been a hallmark of American legal thought enshrined in our democratic tradition for generations. A focus on the indigent is appropriate in the pro bono context and in no way narrows the scope of individuals or groups that need the assistance of voluntary services.

Alternative B is a much needed revision to our current practices with regard to pro bono service. I urge you to adopt it.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William T. Burgess', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

William T. Burgess

WTB/clm

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